

FREEDMAN: “This is the place for me”

Sarah herself had many career possibilities, but she says she never remembered wanting to do anything other than teaching. Both her parents were educators, and although they never pushed her into the classroom, she never considered doing anything else.

“I just have such great memories of school,” she said. “I’ve always loved being a student, and my elementary school teachers were so wonderful. I know this is the place for me.”

Sarah was recently named Alachua County’s 2007 Teacher of the Year during a special ceremony recognizing outstanding teachers from each of the district’s schools. Sarah was one of three finalists for Teacher of the Year honors, along with David D. Dixon, a music teacher from Westwood Middle School and Cathie Gregory, a foreign language teacher at Buchholz High School. Sarah will now go on to represent Alachua County in the Florida Teacher of the Year program.

“I was very surprised and equally delighted,” she said of her selection as Teacher of the Year. “I feel so honored to be representing not only Hidden Oak, but all the terrific teachers in Alachua County.”

Sarah has been teaching for fifteen years now, but she says she still learns something new every day—a concept she wants her students to understand and embrace.

“Learning doesn’t end when they leave the classroom,” she said. “They should know how to solve problems, how to be independent thinkers and how to apply what they learn in my classroom to other situations.”

Ultimately, however, Sarah says it’s her goal to help her students become happy and successful human beings.

“I’m not just in the business of making a good writer or a good reader,” she said. “I feel like I do things in my room to make good people.”

BENJAMIN: “A passionate supporter of her school”

“Duval is my family,” said Benjamin. “I feel like all of the children who been here throughout the years have been my children, and I love them from the bottom of my heart.”

Benjamin’s commitment to Duval Elementary recently earned her recognition as Alachua County’s School-Related Employee of the Year. A committee representing employees, parents and community volunteers selected Benjamin from among 50 nominees from schools and worksites throughout the district. Superintendent Dan Boyd says the recognition is well deserved.

“Phyllis is such a passionate supporter of her school,” said Boyd. “She’s always calling the district office to tell us about the good things happening at Duval, and her enthusiasm is so heartwarming.”

Benjamin wears many hats at Duval. Technically her job titles are home-school liaison and senior clerical assistant. But she’s also responsible for arranging for substitute teachers, a task which can begin as early as 5:30 a.m. and run as late as 11 p.m. She serves as the school’s volunteer coordinator, clinic assistant and hospitality chairman, among other duties.

Principal Leanetta McNealy says there’s nothing Benjamin won’t do for the school and its students.

“Each day she goes beyond the call of duty,” said McNealy. “She obviously loves her job, and she’s the epitome of an extraordinary employee.”

After more than four decades at the school, Benjamin knows the Duval Elementary community better than anyone. She can tell you the name of every child in the school. She knows their parents and their parents’ parents. It’s no wonder that she’s affectionately known as ‘Ms. Duval.’

“She has invaluable knowledge of four generations of families at our school,” said McNealy. “That knowledge enables her to do exemplary work when it comes to supporting our families.”

Benjamin will now go on to represent Alachua County in the 2007 Florida School Related Employee of the Year program. She and the other 49 school and worksite nominees from Alachua County will also be recognized at a special ceremony and at a school board meeting in May.

Teacher, employee of the year named

Benjamin devotes her entire career to Duval



Alachua County's new Teacher of the Year Sarah Freedman works with a student in her Hidden Oak class.

Freedman destined for the classroom

Hanging in Sarah Freedman's third-grade classroom at Hidden Oak Elementary School is a picture of her own elementary school class when she was in third grade. Every year her students make a game of picking her out of the group of eight- and nine-year-olds in the photo. But Sarah says the picture has a more meaningful message.

"I think it's important for them to see that I was in third grade once, and now look at where I am," she said. "I want them to see that the possibilities for them are endless."

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School Related Employee of the Year Phyllis Benjamin chats with students in the hallway of Duval Elementary.

When Phyllis Benjamin first went to work at Duval Elementary School, John F. Kennedy was in the White House, Johnny Carson had just begun hosting the Tonight Show and the price of a first class stamp was 4 cents.

That was in 1962, and today Benjamin is still at Duval. She's worked under eight different principals and is now helping the great-grandchildren of students she worked with during her early years at the school. Forty-four years is a long time to spend working, let alone working at the same place. Why has she stayed at Duval so long?

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EZ Stub gives employees quick, online access to all pay information

A new electronic pay stub service allows employees convenient and secure access to all their pay information via the Internet. The service also provides automatic e-mail or text messages to cell phones with pay stub information.

To take advantage of the EZ Stub service, employees should go to www.EzStub.com from any computer with Internet access. Log in using your Social Security number and the last four digits of your SSN as the

initial password. You will be required to change your password the first time you log in and will also be able to change your log-in code. To change your settings and set up options for e-mail and text messages, go to the Quick Start Guide on the Payroll website at www.sbac.edu/~finance/payroll.htm.

The system is entirely secure, and your SSN and address do not show up on your EZ Stub. For more information, contact Vernita Sharpe at 955-7735 or through e-mail at sharpeva@sbac.edu.